

Rainfall patters are spotted over the Shortgrass Country. Counties that have barely had the dust settled on one side, may have had floods on the other side. Measurements have run from scant 1/10th of an inch to the 4 inch range. By no means is the drouth ended in a general sense. The rain we received here at the ranch was from clouds seeded by the Bureau of Reclamation's experimental program. Earlier in the spring, water thirsty San Angeloans were able to contract the service on the watershed that runs into their lakes. As I stated previously, citizens in the Wool Capital have been more than willing to see us under water, so they could go on with their petunia and St. Augustine farming. Until the past week's flood, weather had been so dry that the outlanders were beginning to agree with them.

Artificial rain works as good as the natural kind. Silver nitrate must not have any flavor. The runoff water smelled and tasted like it was supposed to. I was certainly glad to find out that the imitation rain wasn't as poor a copy of the real thing as imitation biscuits are.

Chemically induced moisture is destructive. More fence was torn up this time than since the flood of '59. The pilot doing the seeding must have got the switch hung on his planter box north of the ranch. The draw that runs across Highway 67 West ripped up posts that were buried four feet in the ground.

I think the ewes on the north side mistook the airplane for the feed wagon or maybe they were dreaming that we'd started feeding them at night. Whatever happened sure drew them to the lowlands. The next morning the trees were overloaded with dead woolies. Ever single one of them was the high priced kind. It hadn't been 10 days since we'd sheared them. We couldn't have been lucky enough to lose them in full wool.

We couldn't tell how much of our collateral was floated down the draw. A coyote started killing at the same time. It would have taken a sheep counter trained in an auction ring to tally the decimation on the hills and in the valleys. By using the 10-buzzard-to-one-carcass formula, I did conclude that we'd lost a lot more than we could afford to.

Nature lovers should have come by to see the coyote's work. He had the most expert style of slashing the sheep's throat that I've ever seen. He didn't leave over 10 head to die a slow death. Those coyotes supporters are right when they say that wolves like rabbit meat better than they do sheep meat. He didn't eat one piece of the sheep he killed. You could tell by his work that he was doing it strictly for sport.

If I had known how great the loss was going to be I'd have taken some pictures to document the scene. Nature normally doesn't try to regain her balance in one night. When you think of natural forces at work, you think of rocks being made into gravel and later on being pulverized into sand. You don't think about a deluge of water driving the grass-killing sheep into the fangs of coyote in one setting.

Waiting for mother nature to act will cost you a lifetime. I'd prefer waiting on a giant sea turtle to hatch off a nest of eggs. Lots of people love nature, but not for her speed.

Since the flood, San Angelo has added two more planes to their cloud seeding operation. The coyote, I think has moved south of us. The longest I've slept in a week was 17 minutes. Won't the bank be happy when it learns that they were underwriting flood and wolf losses along with drouth and bitterweed troubles?

One thing about it, that synthetic rain was a good one. Coyotes and floods don't hurt as much as dry spells do. As far as that goes, ant eaters aren't as ugly as wart hogs.